

CODE OF PRACTICE - ORTHOPTICS

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE

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The aim of the code of practice is to guide the Orthoptist on his or her duties and responsibilities towards the patients who have been self-referred or referred by other professionals. The duties of the Orthoptist shall consist primarily of Orthoptic evaluation and therapy, as well as medical assisting and counseling as an Ophthalmic Technician.

Resume of Duties:

The Orthoptist must be fully competent to perform the following:

1. Evaluate the motility and sensory status of the eyes
 - a. This is achieved by assessing the presence or absence of any concomitant or incomitant deviation;
 - b. Measurements of deviation in the nine cardinal positions, Bielschowsky head tilt, double Maddox, Hess Screen testing, assessment of binocular and diplopic fields, assessment of abnormal head posture, fusional vergences and accommodation range;
 - c. Use different equipment as judged by the Orthoptist to assess and record the degree of the sensory status and binocular function. He or she must be competent in the use of the Synoptophore;
 - d. Evaluate the need for prism therapy, including application of Fresnel prisms, bifocals and 'over' and 'under' correction of the refractive error.
2. Evaluate the visual status of the eyes
 - a. The Orthoptist must be competent in the use of 'Preferential Looking Technique' and other methods useful in the measurement of acuity.
 - b. Although the ability to perform electro-diagnostic tests, like Visual evoked Potential (VER) and Electro-retinogram (ERG), is not essential, the Orthoptist must have the knowledge on the indications as well as be able to interpret the results.
3. Perform Orthoptic treatment
 - a. Independent supervision and direction of amblyopia therapy with various methods of occlusion;
 - b. When Atropine penalization is necessary in the treatment of amblyopia the Orthoptist must have a written consent from an Ophthalmologist;
 - c. Apply standard methods of treatment such as anti-suppression, fusion exercises and fusion amplitude exercises, using red and green filters, T.V. trainer and stereograms, in the treatment of Intermittent strabismus, heterophoria and convergence insufficiency;
 - d. Use various accommodation exercises in the treatment of accommodative insufficiency through measurement and instruction.
4. Perform Visual Field Analysis (Perimetry)
 - a. The Orthoptist must be competent in the use of available visual field machines, both computerized and manual;
 - b. The Orthoptist must be able to interpret the results of visual field analysis and must always submit a written report to the requisitioner of these tests.

5. Provide other ancillary services
 - a. Although the Orthoptist is not expected to perform other duties further training and experience in other fields would be beneficial for him or her professional development. Depending on his or her competence, he or she should be able to perform the following examinations:
 - i. Balanced non-cycloplegic and cycloplegic refraction;
 - ii. Biometry;
 - iii. Contact and non-contact tonometry;
 - iv. Contact lens fitting and instruction.

Referrals

- a. Clients can be self referred or referred from other professionals, namely Ophthalmologists, other Orthoptists, Optometrists, General Practitioners and other Medical Specialists.
- b. The clients, unless otherwise instructed by their specialist, are to be provided with a written Orthoptic report and referred back to their referring specialist.
- c. When the referring specialist instructs the Orthoptist to follow up and manage the condition, the Orthoptist should do so in the best interests of the client and refer back to the referring specialist when surgical or other non Orthoptic treatment is recommended by the Orthoptist.

Medical assisting and counseling

- a. These duties include direction and flow of clients, taking patient histories, visual acuity, external eye examination, including pupil testing and dilatation.
- b. The Orthoptist, when needed, should assist with minor surgical procedures and should have basic knowledge of sterile field and sterilization, and care of surgical instruments.
- c. The role of counseling involves advising patients and their families (in the case of minors), regarding the diagnosis and treatment regimes as recommended, even after consultation with the Ophthalmologist, Optometrist or other Medical Professional. It also includes pre- and post-surgical counseling and discussion of the treatment modalities recommended.

Patient confidentiality and reporting

- a. At all times the Orthoptist must ensure not to disclose any information to third parties, regarding the medical and/or ophthalmic condition of the clients under his or her care.
- b. It is the duty of the Orthoptist to document the findings, take full responsibility for, and sign any reports or documents written.
- c. The Orthoptist must ensure that all documents are appropriately filed in the client's hospital files.
- d. All regulations imposed by the *Data Protection Act* must be observed.

Safety standards

- a. The Orthoptist must ensure the safety of his clients at all times and observe any *Health and Safety* regulations where necessary.
- b. The Orthoptist must not expose his or her clients to any danger as a result of injury or infectious disease.

- c. All equipment used during examinations should be always maintained in good functional condition and all safety precautions taken.
- d. The Orthoptist must ensure that the work load does not put any undue pressure on him or herself such as to endanger the safe standard of practice.

Commercial

- a. The Orthoptist must avoid advertising or signing any advertisement using their professional qualification to encourage the sale of commercial products.
- b. In promoting a private service, the Orthoptist may do so in accordance with health care practice.

Rewards

The Orthoptist must refuse to accept any gifts, favour or hospitality that might be interpreted as seeking to exact undue influence to obtain professional treatment.

Research Duties

- a. Orthoptists are expected to maintain and update their knowledge of Orthoptics by attending seminars, meetings and other continuous professional educational programmes.
- b. Orthoptists also have the duty to assist other professional staff in developing, reviewing and supervising research protocols and writing talks, papers and other scientific materials.

It is highly recommended that every Orthoptist carries out Continuing Professional Development.